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ABSTRACT

A brief description is provided of a successful peer tutoring model implemented by Portsmouth High School (New Hampshire) in which student tutors volunteer to work under the direct supervision of the special educator on reading, math, science, and pre-vocational skills. Peer tutor responsibilities on assisting students in reading are presented, with emphasis on tutor training in goals, lessons, and the use of individualized checklists. Organizational studies are advocated as a way peer tutors can aid students in organizing their work and study more effectively. Resource math courses are seen as an opportunity for "reversed mainstreaming" in which peer tutors from regular education programs are integrated into special education programs to facilitate positive peer interaction as well as learning. Positive ramifications of peer tutoring are: additional one-to-one attention to students with special educational needs, shared social experiences, improved self-esteem, decreased disruptive behavior, improved work habits, reduced stigma of special needs, and new and positive peer friendships. (LH)

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**Task Force for the
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Resource Paper No. 13

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PEER TUTORING

by

Barbara Holder and Bob Lister

When you enter the resource room you observe a variety of activi-
ties in several areas of the room. Some students are reading quietly
while others work in small groups. There is organization, discipline and
most importantly there is learning. At first glance, it looks like any
other group of adolescents, but there is a difference. Some students are
here to learn while others are here to tutor. Those involved in the
tutoring have been recruited by the special education teacher to work as
peer teachers for students with special educational needs.

The Model

Peer tutors are students who volunteer their time during study
halls to work in the resource room under the direct supervision of the
special educator. They are involved in planning lessons, working
directly with students and providing feedback to the staff regarding any
observations they make while working with students. In some cases, peer
tutors earn credits toward graduation for their work and most have voiced
a concern to teach or work with people in some capacity after graduation.
In any case, not only do they provide their students with practical
learning; anyone who operates a peer tutoring program would agree that
the tutors learn themselves throughout the process (Haun, 1975).

The Portsmouth High School, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, peer
tutoring program began last year. The first group of tutors worked
individually with students with low reading abilities. They assisted
students in the basic skills of identifying letters, words, oral reading
and comprehension activities. As the first school year passed, the tutors
became increasingly valuable. This year their duties have been expanded
to assisting in math, science (organizational studies), and pre-vocational
skill areas.

Responsibilities of Peer Tutors

Reading

Each tutor assists students with special educational needs through

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an individualized reading program which consists of goals, lessons and check-lists. Prior to actual interaction, a training agenda is presented, and each tutor knows how and when to intervene and correct errors at each step.

They participate in group activities, i.e., plays, creative writing, etc., which encourage and motivate resource room students.

Organizational Studies

The Peer Tutors aid in teaching students how to organize their work and study more effectively. Each tutor works with specific student(s) on daily work check sheets. The individualized check sheets consist of assignments coordinated with other classroom programs, and activities which reinforce specific skill areas. These usually consist of academics at some level, but do not exclude social and vocational areas.

Resource Math

Resource Math is a course designed for low level special education math students in which basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division skills are reinforced. This course prepares students for independent functioning in regular educational math programs. The Peer Tutors are taught the sequence of skills on which the students are working, and aid them in areas of need as previously identified through formal and informal assessment. In addition to daily activities, many students have access to a computer station. Tutors and their students work together on specific math programs.

Peer tutoring programs provide opportunities for "reversed mainstreaming", i.e., integration of students from regular education programs into special education programs. This reversed mainstreaming concept is not new, and most educators intuitively recognize the importance of positive peer interaction which the peer tutoring model provides. However, as stated by Price and Dequine (1982), personality factors are a prime concern in selecting appropriate tutor-student matches.

Significant ramifications noted in the Portsmouth High School program, as a result of implementing the peer-tutoring model, were as follows:

1. Additional one-to-one attention provided to students with special educational needs.
2. Shared social experiences.
3. Improved self-esteem and working attitudes.
4. Decreased disruptive behavior.
5. Increased productive work habits.
6. Reduced stigma of special needs.
7. New and positive peer-friendships provided.

Summary

When peer tutors are aware of the goals and objectives of the special education program, are closely supervised and provided with a well-devised training agenda and materials, they can be invaluable to the special educator. It is important to note that their relationships with students with special educational needs and their accepting attitudes will be long lasting.

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Biographical Data

Bob Lister is the Special Education Department Chairman at Portsmouth High School in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He graduated from Keene State College and the University of New Hampshire and received his doctorate from Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. Some of his interests include teacher education, designing programs for adolescent populations, and Special Olympics.

Barbara Holder graduated from Plymouth State College and George Peabody College, Nashville, Tennessee. She is presently employed as a resource room teacher at Portsmouth High School. She also has responsibility for the work experience program and peer tutoring program, and has an interest in computer-assisted instruction for special needs adolescents.